



Developing a Home Practice Handout week 7

The following practice should take approx. 15 minutes if you include the focus and the relaxation, or 10 minutes if you exclude these elements.

Find a quiet space where you have enough room to work on your mat and you won't be disturbed. Ensure you leave 2 hours after a meal before practicing, and follow the precautions mentioned in this handout. *If at any time you feel uncomfortable or unwell please stop immediately and seek appropriate advice.*

Step 1: Centering the mind – 1 minute

Come to a comfortable seated position and focus into the breath. Breathe in and out through the nostrils and be aware of the rise and fall of the chest and abdomen as you breathe. Observe how you feel. Do not force the breath, but allow it to come and go gently and smoothly as you concentrate on drawing in energy on the inhale, and letting go of tension on the exhale.



Step 2: Preparatory work – 5 - 8 minutes

Apanasana: lying on your back, bend the knees and draw them in towards the chest. Keep them together. Take the hands around the shins, and begin to gently circle the knees in one direction. Take the circle in the other direction. Then separate the knees and circle them in opposite directions, warming the hip joints. Reverse direction.



Reclined Cobbler: Remain lying on the back, bringing the soles of the feet together. Allow the knees to fall out to the sides, gradually letting go in the groin area as the knees come nearer to the floor. Try not to overarch in the lower back. Arms are by sides, palms facing downwards. After a few breaths begin to take the arms up and over the head on an inhale, and back down to the floor on an exhale. Repeat several times.



Cradle Stretch: Lying on back, bend the right knee and place the right foot on the floor. Bring the left ankle over the right leg just below the knee joint. Lift the right foot off the floor and clasp the hands behind the right thigh, left hand going through the space between the legs. Encourage the right thigh towards the abdomen, whilst pushing out in the opposite direction with the left knee.



Hamstring Stretching and shoulder opening: Stand in mountain pose, feet together, back straight, hands by the sides, pulling up tall. Bring hands to prayer at the chest. Inhale arms overhead, bring palms together and look to thumbs. Exhale, bend forwards from the hip crease leading with the chest, taking the hands to the shins or the floor. Inhale look forwards, exhale look down. Inhale all the

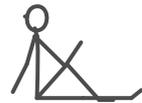
way up bringing arms into prayer overhead, exhale hands to prayer at chest, repeat.

Step 3: Postures – 10 minutes

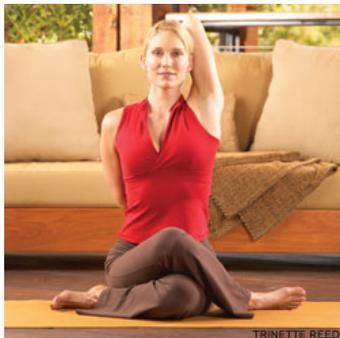


Baddha Konasana, Cobblers Pose: 1) Sitting against a wall, ensure lower and mid spine are in contact with it. Draw heels close towards pelvis; and place soles of feet together. Allow knees to fall out, gradually reaching towards the floor. Lean forward slightly to take hands around feet, arms straight, no strain, then straighten back to bring spine back into contact with wall. Pull up through spine as much as possible. Keeping the heels together open the balls of the feet, allowing the knees to come closer to the floor. 2) Repeat this with the same spinal alignment away from the wall. Breathe deeply. If desired, gently draw head towards feet on an exhale, and hold, breathing deeply.

Marichyasana III, Sage pose no. 3: Begin in Dandasana with both legs straight out in front of you. Sit on a block if you cannot straighten the knees, or place a rolled blanket underneath them. Bend right knee in towards left knee and place right foot next to left knee. Pull up through spine. Inhale left hand out to front, and wrap left arm around right knee; or left elbow comes over right knee, allowing it to push right knee to in towards left. Twist from the waist, using the left arm to lever you further round. Remember to pull up through the spine (practice against a wall if desired initially). Breathe as fully and deeply as you can. Repeat on other side.



Gomukhasana, Cows Face pose: 1) If cows face legs are not a possibility for you at this time, sit in a kneeling or cross legged position. For cow face legs, first kneel up, then cross the left knee over the right knee. As you sit back in the space between your feet, keep the right knee on the floor. The left knee should sit neatly on top of the right. 2) Ensure the shoulders are properly warmed up (see p1). Take the right arm straight up into the air. Bend at the elbow and take fingers towards centre of shoulders. Rotate the left arm back and behind the spine, bending at the elbow and encouraging the left fingers to come up towards the right to grasp them, or if this is not possible hold a belt in the right and walk the fingers of the left hand up it gradually.



Keep the spine lengthened and keep the neck as straight as possible, working the right elbow back towards the centre of the back of the head. Hold and breathe; repeat on other side, remembering to change legs over if you took cows face legs option.

Step 4: Relaxation.

Ensure you put on an extra layer or cover yourself with a blanket. Lying onto the back, take your feet mat width apart. Take the arms slightly out from the sides, palms turning upwards. Support the head and neck if desired, and ensure you are completely comfortable. Allow the eyes to close and focus into the breath, concentrating on the breath and letting any outside thoughts go. Focus on letting go with every out breath. Stay for 3 minutes, or longer if desired. Namaste.

